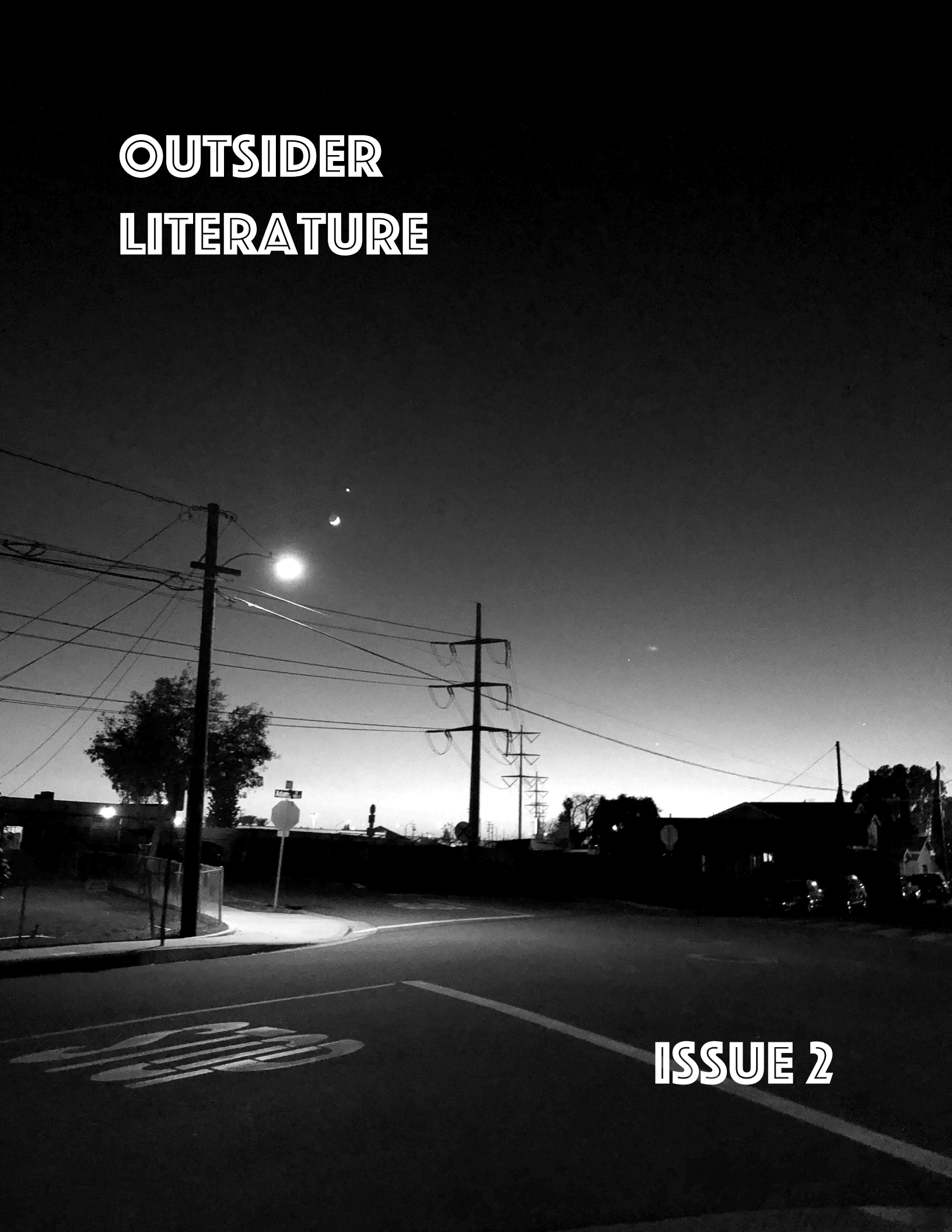
OUTSIDER LITERATURE



ISSUE 2

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Poetry

Loneliness

Tyler Hardy

I've sat on my couch for 2 days. Haven't left my apartment in 3.

I sit here vaping, only leaving for work or to get groceries or fast food.

I wonder what I would remember when I get dementia. It runs in both families. My childhood is a blur, and I wish to forget things of my 20s. I pretend to speak to my former partners while home alone for company, so maybe that's what I'll do.

Teleology[1]

David McDonald

For the birds, there is no Point A or Point B,
But just a found perch or the wind under their wings.

Alas.

I'm not there anymore
And I'm not there yet
Neither here, just in transit,
Unless I'm home,
Where I can sit
On a Sunday or summer morning,
And my teleology resolves.

[1] Teleology is the practice of explaining something by referring to its purpose, end, or goal. "The word comes from the Greek words telos, meaning 'end, purpose, or goal', and logos, meaning 'explanation or reason'" (The Ethics Centre).

The Sun Is Not To Blame

David McDonald

The sun is not to blame for blindness
Nor the moon for sadness and longing.

The ocean does not wreck ships or drown sailors,
And the sky does not abandon us.

They exist with no intent
And are perfectly unaware of us
Or anything else
Or themselves;

And they burn
And reflect
And swell
And expand
Because there is nothing else to do.

Doubt: A Self-Reflection Walking Home

Thierry Hall

There is a dilemma that courses
through my blood, feeds the brain
what it wants. Finds a problem,
makes it mine, turns me to without.

Rearranges order to a doubt -
I was together, to find inside
that what I thought was certain
sends me back into my mind. Passes
off what isn't mine, pulls me inside out.

If I can course better path, route a sieve[2]
into the vein, filter it from blood,
take the drugs to soothe my brain, give it
all of what I should, perhaps then this self
will not feel so other and sit as is -

a reflection in the needle barrel
that only wants to live.

[2] A sieve is “a device with meshes or perforations through which finer particles of a mixture (as of ashes, flour, or sand) of various sizes may be passed to separate them from coarser ones, through which the liquid may be drained from liquid-containing material, or through which soft materials may be forced for reduction to fine particles” (Merriam-Webster).

Not a Whole, But Together in Pieces

Thierry Hall

There is not an I, but we
in me -
not a whole,
but discontinuity,

and when we speak,
                silently,
alone,
but together,
I or we are there only,

whispering to you lowly
a plea
in pieces,
repeated into the mirrors gaze;

not a whole, but together, in pieces.

The Order of Dreams

Martín Negrón

dreams are ordered like memories
and everyday objects
they depend on probability
and their place in relation to others
they put something inside of something that is identical to something
we have already lived
and that is, quite frequently, a habit

their host is noted
in light of the assigned sequence
(order, family, genus[3], species…)

we carry the same mark

we have always existed

behind the golden keyhole through which the cyclops spies
behind the voice
that asks for the fulfillment of a dream
(or is that memory not ours?)

surrendering oneself to desire
is to control what we can by yielding or withholding power
as we hope for something in return

this is learned
in the same way we learn that following and defying orders
is key to getting out alive

but dreams are naturally
disordered
they revert to their liquid form
and burn
revolting against the new dream order,
conformed harmony
and scare tactics

---

[3] A genus is "a group of animals or plants, more closely related than a family, but less similar than a species" (Cambridge Dictionary).

in the end we see
that dreams have no one place
and that something is always missing on the way back

Allie

Rae Lopez

I walk into your apartment
Which houses you,
Your boyfriend,
Your newborn,
And your toxic relationship

And in the shadow
Of yet another fight
A clear vase of water
Fuzzy green stems
And bright yellow petals
Catch my eye -

Sunflowers,
Your favorite flower

They decorated the hall
Where you celebrated
The moment your life
Blossomed from single woman
To mother
Bringing new life
Into the wasteland
Of this place that was once
Your refuge.

You were convinced then that
Your love would be enough
To fix this broken man
Sacrificing your body
And sanity
In the process.

Over the years I watch you wilt away
Because you absorbed
What was never yours to carry
And I am reminded
Of how powerful
Our subconscious is

And how the universe
Conspires[4] to save us
When we are at our lowest

And so I muster up the courage
To softly say

“Did you know
That sunflowers are
Hyperaccumulators[5]?
Able to absorb
Dangerous levels of
Heavy metals from deep
Within the soil?
Moving toxic substances
From the dirt
And holding them within
Their own stems, leaves, and petals?
This is why
Sunflowers are often used
To clean up
Nuclear disasters -
The worst catastrophes
Created by the
Hands of men.”

You smile and say,
“How beautiful.”

I smile and pray
One day you will understand.

---

[4] Conspire means “to plan secretly with other people to do something bad, illegal, or against someone's wishes” (Cambridge Dictionary).

[5] A hyperaccumulator is “a plant that absorbs toxins, such as heavy metals, to a greater concentration than that in the soil in which it is growing” (Collins English Dictionary).

In the Space Between Words

Bernadine Cortina

there was no air.
Noong unang panahon
O
A long time ago.

They say stories start like this, but…
Kelan ba yun?
Anong panahon?
Saan mo ba akong gustong magsimula?

Shall I start here?

2018
No.
2019
No.

Now?
It was four hundred years ago. A year ago. Or seven years ago.

What was hard about it? I-
hands shake.
breath trembles.
Ah, eto… sisimula nga ulit ako.
Yesterday, I was happy, and then she wrote to me again…
It was just a couple words, but
she, uhm…

and …

ano…

Parang masakit.

Ma sakit.

Ma, sakit.

MAAA SAKIT.

(Mother, pain, sickness) *What do we do about mother wounds*
Dapat…
I think… no.
What happened, you're asking?
I have been trying to tell you.
…
…
…
There was no air here.

No Elegies[6] Here

Bernadine Cortina

The world celebrates when spring has come
when flowers are in bloom
but I ask here of the dying,
and I ask now of the dead.

Have you witnessed a flower begin to wilt?
Have you seen dying as process?
For flowers, it starts with loss
of water, causing collapse
collapse,
where colors turn to brown.
Floral heads hang heavy.
Stems standing start to bend.

Have you ever seen a *human* start to wilt?

Of lifetimes marking achievements,
All I feel now is how exhausting it is
to always have to bloom.

The first time I recognized a person wilting,
I was looking in the mirror.
beautiful, painful, necessary
a dying process I get to call mine.

When survival is traumatic,
may there be no need for celebration.
For others in seasons of wilting,
may you find peaceful illegibility[7].

There is no need to justify your existence here.

Dying flowers will shed their petals where you walk,
so may you wilt
may you shrivel

---

[6] An elegy is "a sad poem or song, especially remembering someone who has died or something in the past" (Cambridge Dictionary).

[7] Illegibility refers to the quality "of being impossible or almost impossible to read" (Cambridge Dictionary).

may what needs to die here finally
die
a season onto other seasons…

A Love Letter

Emile Campos

I wish I could write
a love letter to myself
on my skin.

Kiss my own scars
and apologize to myself
for the ones I made
on purpose.

I'm sorry for making
you feel hard to love.

I'm sorry for making
you feel less than ordinary.

I'm gonna give you
as much love as I possibly can.

-I promise